



# MIAMI BEACH

OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

NO. LTC # 155-2006

## LETTER TO COMMISSION

TO: Mayor David Dermer and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Jorge M. Gonzalez, City Manager

DATE: June 9, 2006

SUBJECT: BI-WEEKLY UPDATE—April 15, 2006- June 9, 2006

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CITY CLERK'S OFFICE

The purpose of this LTC is to provide you with an update of issues the Administration has recently been focusing on between April 15 and June 9, 2006.

### CLEANER AND SAFER

**POLICE DEPARTMENT** – On April 24, 2006, Command Staff of the Miami Beach Police Department attended a meeting with representatives of the Florida Department of Transportation in preparation for the 63<sup>rd</sup> Street Flyover construction.

On April 26, 2006, the Miami Beach Police Department welcomed the new Citizen's Police Academy participants in class #28.

Thursday, April 27, 2006, staff of the Miami Beach Police Department participated in the Take Your Daughters and Sons to Work Day events at City Hall and the Miami Beach Police Department Headquarters Building.

On May 3, 2006, the Miami Beach Police Department held a memorial ceremony at headquarters in honor of Miami Beach Police Officers killed in the line of duty.

On Thursday, May 4, 2006, Miami Beach Police Department Command Staff attended the Dade County Police Memorial ceremony for officers killed in the line of duty at Tropical Park.

In preparation for the upcoming Superbowl XLI, Miami Beach Police Department Command Staff attended a planning meeting at Dolphin Stadium to discuss NFL sanctioned events which will take place in the City of Miami Beach.

On May 18, 2006, the Miami Beach Police Department hosted the Miami-Dade County Chiefs of Police Association meeting at the Wyndham Hotel.

### BEAUTIFUL AND VIBRANT, MATURE, STABLE RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITY, URBAN AND HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

**QUALITY OF LIFE COMMUNITY OUTREACH MEETINGS** – Approved by referendum on November 3, 1992, Quality of Life funding was created through the implementation of an additional 1% resort tax on room rent.

Over the next two years, the North, Middle and South Beach neighborhoods are each allocated an estimated \$1.4 million from these resort tax revenues to spend on tourism-

related projects.

As directed by the Finance and Citywide Projects Committee, and later endorsed by the City Commission, the Administration would use these funds for capital projects as well as solicit community input through a public involvement process prior to recommendations by the City Manager.

As part of this year's budget process, community outreach meetings were held from May 22-24, 2006 in North, Middle and South Beach to give stakeholders the opportunity to provide input and help prioritize capital projects, which include potential park improvements, neighborhood improvements, alley improvements as well as traffic and transportation improvements. These meetings were attended by City staff from the City Manager's Office, Office of Budget and Performance Improvement, CIP, Public Works, Planning and Parks and Recreation departments. The priorities identified through this public process will be reviewed by the Commission as part of our budget process.

#### CULTURAL, ENTERTAINMENT AND TOURISM CAPITAL

**CONVENTION CENTER STAKEHOLDER MEETING** — On April 17, 2006, as follow-up action to the Commission's Convention Center Workshop, a meeting was coordinated with stakeholders to further discuss the current needs of the Convention Center as well as the future of the facility.

#### WELL-IMPROVED INFRASTRUCTURE

**CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS**—The Capital Improvement Projects Office is working diligently to complete a series of construction projects around the City. Following are some highlights of on-going projects:

The Belle Isle and Belle Isle Park Improvement Project includes the installation of a new water main and storm water pump station, drainage, streetscape improvement and the renovation of Belle Isle Park. The contractor has been mobilized on the site as of the week of May 29. A temporary fence has been erected around the park for safety. Temporary parking spaces are being provided for those residents whose spaces are displaced during the construction period.

The Colony Theater Project entails renovations to improve theater operations and performance functions, as well as provide renovations to comply with ADA Title III requirements. All major construction work is now complete, and most Building Department approvals have been obtained. Final completion is expected by June 2006.

The City, along with the developer and contractor, is evaluating the performance of the drainage along 1400-1600 Bay Road. The expected completion of this project is fall of 2006.

The renovation and ADA improvements to restrooms, doors and door hardware as well as box offices at the Convention Center are currently underway. Twelve pairs of restrooms and one Men's restroom located in Halls A, B, C, and D, and Lobby C and D are substantially complete. Notice to Proceed was issued on December 9, 2005 for the Group C restrooms located in Halls A, C, D and Skywalk. Work has commenced in all Group C restrooms and substantial completion is expected in early summer 2006.

The Arts in Public Places Committee funded a cultural enhancement to the Bandshell Park consisting of a mosaic tile artwork in memory of the Beatles. The Beatle Mandala Project is being revised and additional scope and enhancements are being evaluated. Construction

plans have been submitted to the Building Department for review and permitting.

#### SUPPORTING OUTCOMES TO SUSTAINABILITY OF VISION

**EMPLOYEE AWARDS AND RECOGNITION** — In April, Linda Gonzalez, Labor Relations Director, was presented with the National Public Employer Labor Relations Association's (NPELRA) 2006 Pacesetter Award, which is presented to individuals or organizations who have demonstrated particularly innovative leadership in public sector labor relations.

The Pacesetter Award recognizes professional achievements in resolving labor conflicts, addressing new challenges, and assisting others in their growth in public sector labor relations and human resources. Pacesetters are role models who serve as resources to others in the field.

Linda also recently attained certification by the Supreme Court of Florida as a County Mediator having fulfilled the requirements of the Florida Rules for Certified and Court-Appointed Mediators. Mediation is a critical tool necessary for the successful resolution of numerous grievance and arbitration matters. She is also certified by Florida Public Employers Labor Relations Association (FPELRA) as a Public Sector Labor Relations Professional.

**FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS**— The City held a series of focus group meetings on April 4-6, 2006. These meetings were driven by our continued efforts to build on our Community Satisfaction Survey.

The City has been systematically working to address issues that were identified as key concerns from the survey results. As examples of what has already been implemented, the City has increased police presence in neighborhoods, increased service levels for cleaning City streets and sidewalks (particularly in business areas) and increased programming and free offerings in City parks, among other actions.

The focus group meetings and phone interviews provided rich, detailed feedback regarding the topics of interest to the City of Miami Beach. Overall, the information received across groups was consistent – residents and business owners offered similar feedback. However, there were some unique concerns/ differences by region. Below is a summary of the information received for each topic area:

- **SAFETY**: Participants have a holistic view of safety. When asked about safety concerns in the City of Miami Beach, comments encompass some of the 'typical' concerns around crime, but also include personal safety issues like trash and sanitation and getting around the City (traffic, sidewalk safety, etc). In relation to personal safety issues, residents most frequently spoke about the need for increased enforcement of existing codes and laws, more street lighting in alleyways and along the Boardwalk, and the need to have a more pedestrian-friendly City (make it easier to walk/bike around). On a positive note, some residents indicated that they have seen an increased police presence recently and overall, the City is safer now than it was 10 years ago. Many residents would like to see more foot/bike patrols by police officers, however.
- **CONSTRUCTION IN NEIGHBORHOODS**: Residents feel that the biggest challenge with respect to construction is the litter/sanitation concerns that develop (e.g., blowing of dirt/dust, cement on sidewalks, overflowing collection bins, etc.). Other key challenges mentioned include impacts on traffic (jams, slow moving construction trucks, detour delays), destruction of public property by construction vehicles, and the number of 'unfinished' projects around the City. Finally, residents questioned whether the City has the infrastructure to support the influx of residents that new construction brings.

- AFFORDABLE HOUSING: Discussion focused less around the City providing government-type housing (e.g. Section 8) and more around lower/middle-class residents' ability to afford to live in the City. Frequently mentioned was whether public employees (i.e., police, teachers, etc.) can afford to buy a home or pay rent in the City (the sense is that many cannot). Landlords also commented that, due to high property taxes on rental properties, it was becoming increasingly difficult to offer apartments at an affordable rate (hence, the trend to sell properties to developers). Moreover, there is concern that the City's diverse mix of residents may soon disappear, as lower/ middle-class residents are squeezed out of renting/owning homes. It should be noted however that several residents do not feel that it is the City's job to assist the community with housing (i.e., should be market-driven).
- CULTURAL ACTIVITIES/SPECIAL EVENTS: Residents do make a distinction between the City's cultural activities and its special events. Cultural activities, which are attended by most residents, are viewed more positively and are seen as being geared more towards their interests (e.g., movie night, Pavarotti on the Beach, street festivals). Special events (e.g., Hip Hop weekend, Memorial Day, Boat Show) are instead seen as geared towards visitors/tourists and bring inconveniences into the lives of residents (e.g., parking issues, noise, cleanliness, etc.). However, many residents have attended these events and understand their importance to the City's economy (there were the suggestions to allow residents first opportunity to buy tickets and to offer tickets to residents at reduced prices). However, if given the choice, residents want to see more cultural activities or special events that are smaller in-scale, family-friendly and celebrate the diversity of the City's residents (e.g., Latin Music, Opera, etc.). Safety does not appear to be a real concern at these activities or events. However, there were comments that the City should expend the same high levels of effort into safety and cleanliness, which it does at events, everyday.
- VALUE OF SERVICE FOR TAXES: When questioned as to the value of services residents receive for the taxes they pay, majority (a little over half) rated the value as "good", while a third said "fair" (less than 10% rated it either "excellent" or "poor"). Services such as the Police, EMS, and Hurricane Preparedness are given high marks. The services most often mentioned that need attention are improving cleanliness of streets/alleyways, street/sidewalk repair, increased enforcement of codes (esp., traffic violations, construction/building violations), further beautification of the City overall (especially parks/planting of trees), and offering a reliable, consistent public transportation system.
- AVAILABLE LABOR POOL (BUSINESS OWNERS ONLY): The challenges regarding development of labor for businesses in the City are tied to the construction/affordable housing debate. With property taxes and rents/mortgages increasing, businesses looking for cheap labor usually go outside the City since the higher City rents squeeze out people who cannot afford to live in the City (as noted earlier). It was mentioned that landlords/owners would have to lower the rents they charge in order to 'subsidize' a labor pool for businesses, which most agree is not likely to happen. Therefore, many feel that cheap labor will continue to come from outside the City, thereby putting extra pressure on the City to develop/provide 24-hour public transportation, especially for those who live outside the City.

## REGIONAL FINDINGS

- **NORTH BEACH:** Levels of crime, homelessness and lack of affordable housing were key concerns among this group. In their view, although the tax rate is the same, the City does not devote the same resources or time to North Beach as it does in Mid/South Beach. While North Beach participants did comment on seeing some recent positive trends (increased police presence, development of the Youth Center), they still feel much more needs to be done.
- **MIDDLE BEACH:** As a largely residential area (single-family, condos), concerns surrounding construction, affordable housing and property taxes/values were high on the minds of Mid-Beach residents. They also commented on the issues with traffic in the area and that the City should provide more in the way of recreation facilities/opportunities and parks for the community.
- **SOUTH BEACH:** As the most trafficked and visited region (by residents and tourists), the South Beach residents interviewed commented a great deal about safety concerns due to high levels of traffic (on weekends especially), outside nightclubs (drugs, rowdiness), and during special events (noise, vandalism). The group seemed to be split as to whether it is the City's responsibility to assist residents with affordable housing. Most felt that code enforcement (traffic, sanitation) is lacking.

**RESULTS-ORIENTED GOVERNMENT: "MY ESSENTIAL PIECE" PRESENTATIONS—** In our continuing effort to communicate the Strategic Plan throughout the organization, the Office of Budget and Performance Improvement has been scheduling presentations with every City department in order to train employees on the priorities identified through the Community Satisfaction survey, the Strategic Plan as well as their department's role and supporting workplan in achieving these goals.

These presentations are tailored to each department and center on the concept of how each employee and each department is an "essential piece" in the achieving the goals as laid out in the City's Strategic Plan.

As of May 4, 2006, a total of 1,042 employees in our workforce have participated in this results-oriented government training.

**BUDGET MEETINGS—** During this period, I have completed final budget meetings with all of the City's departments. In the coming weeks, I will be finalizing the proposed budget for presentation to the Commission in July.

**TAKE YOUR DAUGHTERS AND SONS TO WORK DAY—** For the 10th year, the City of Miami Beach participated in Take Your Daughters and Sons to Work Day and demonstrated the inner workings of city government to its young team members. On April 27<sup>th</sup>, approximately 200 children participated in a range of activities including a SWOT team demonstration as well as a visit from Commissioners Matti H. Bower and Richard L. Steinberg.

**EDUCATION FAIR—**On May 2, 2006, the City of Miami Beach and the Higher Education Partnership of Southeast Florida hosted an Education Fair at City Hall. There was presentation from local colleges and universities including Florida International University, Barry University, Miami-Dade Community College, Nova Southeastern University, Carlos Albizu University, DeVry University and many more.

**COMMISSION RETREAT**—On April 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>, the City Commission held its Commission Retreat. For the third year, we had the opportunity to discuss the major issues facing our City.

**HURRICANE FAIRS** – In preparation for the upcoming hurricane season, the City is held its 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Hurricane Information and Preparedness Fairs. Miami Beach departments and other public and private organizations provided valuable information, and encouraged residents to learn first hand how to best prepare for this year's storms. The first 100 participants at each event received a free 2 ½ gallon collapsible water jug. These fairs took place on the following dates:

Sunday, May 07, 2006  
10 am to 2 pm  
1000 block of Lincoln Road

Saturday, May 13, 2006  
9 am to Noon  
North Beach Farmer's Market at the Normandy Fountain  
(71<sup>st</sup> Street and Rue Vendome)

Saturday, May 20, 2006  
9 am to Noon  
RDA South Pointe Police Satellite Station  
210 2<sup>nd</sup> Street

**EMPLOYEE EMERGENCY HOTLINE** – In preparation for the hurricane season and as part of the City's internal communication efforts, our employee emergency hotline will be activated to provide all employees important and up-to-date information. In the event of an actual emergency/hurricane, this phone line will be activated with a pre-recorded message providing important information such as which City offices are open or closed and when individuals should report to work. The employee emergency hotline number is (305) 604-INFO (4636).

**E-GOVERNMENT/VELOCITY HALL** – A new online service has been made available to Miami Beach residents and business owners in order to provide up-to-date information on the disposition of code compliance complaints, violations and cases.

In an effort to provide our residents the opportunity to research the status of all code compliance complaints online and at their convenience, programming enhancements have been made to Velocity Hall's Permits Manager. These enhancements allow interested parties to search code compliance cases by address.

This feature can be accessed through the City's homepage and selecting "Online Services" then clicking on "Check Code Violations/Complaints" under Neighborhood Services.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact me.

JMG/DM